



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes – 2013

August 2, 2012

Note: *New language is in italics.* Deleted language is indicated by ~~strikethrough~~.

WESTERN DISTRICT

CHANGE (page 24):

BITTERROOT RIVER (note: river flows south to north)

Ditches, canals and sloughs between US 93 and east side highway, and between Hamilton and the Florence Bridge.

- Regulations are the same as the adjacent river section

Bitterroot River from confluence of the East and West Forks to the mouth, West Fork Bitterroot River downstream from Painted Rocks Dam, and East Fork Bitterroot River downstream from Star Falls.

- Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout
- Extended season for northern pike and whitefish and catch-and-release for trout open December 1 to third Saturday in May with aquatic insects, maggots and/or artificial lures only.

West Fork Bitterroot River downstream from Painted Rocks Dam

- Catch-and-release for rainbow trout.
- Combined Trout Limit: 3 brown trout daily and in possession

East Fork Bitterroot River downstream from Star Falls

- Catch-and-release for rainbow trout.
- Combined Trout Limit: 3 brown trout daily and in possession.

Bitterroot River from confluence of East and West Forks to ~~Woodside Bridge~~ the north boundary of the Woodside Bridge FAS

- Combined Trout Limit: 3 rainbow or brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 14 inches.

North Boundary of the Woodside Bridge FAS ~~Woodside Bridge~~ to Florence Bridge

- Catch-and-release for all trout
- Artificial lures only

Florence Bridge to mouth of Bitterroot River

- Combined Trout Limit: 3 rainbow or brown trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 14 inches.

Rationale: This change extends a harvest section of the river further downstream to include the Woodside FAS. The FAS is a popular place for people to access the river and fish from the bank. Providing opportunity for harvesting fish from the bank at the FAS is consistent with the use of the FAS prior to recent (2012) regulation changes.

CHANGE (page 29):

CLEARWATER RIVER DRAINAGE AND TRIBUTARIES (*lakes not included, see exceptions for individual lakes elsewhere*)

Clearwater River upstream from the Salmon Lake inlet ~~Lake Inez Fish Barrier~~ and all tributaries of the Clearwater River except the West Fork and Marshall Creek

- Closed to fishing from Rainy Lake fish barrier downstream for 100 yards (no change).
- Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout
- ~~Catch and release for bass~~
- Northern Pike: no limit, *open to spearing*
- ~~Combined Trout: 3 daily and in possession, none over 12~~
- ~~Spearing: open for northern pike~~
- *Snagging: open for salmon from Lake Inez outlet to Seeley Lake inlet from September 15 through November 30. Closed to snagging from Seeley Lake outlet to Salmon Lake inlet*

~~Clearwater River from Lake Inez fish barrier downstream to Salmon Lake outlet~~

- ~~Closed to fishing from Lake Inez fish barrier downstream for 100 yards~~
- ~~Open entire~~
- ~~Catch and release for bass~~
- ~~Northern Pike: no limit~~
- ~~Spearing: open for northern pike~~
- ~~Snagging: open for salmon from Lake Inez fish barrier to Seeley Lake from September 15 through November 30. Closed to snagging from Seeley Lake to Salmon Lake~~

Clearwater River from Salmon Lake outlet to mouth, including Blanchard Lake and Elbow Lake

- Open entire year
- Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout
- Catch-and-release for bass
- Combined Trout Limit: 3 daily and in possession, none over 12 inches
- Northern pike: no limit, *open to spearing*
- ~~Spearing: open for northern pike~~

~~Lakes (Lake Alva, Lake Inez, Placid Lake, Salmon Lake and Seeley Lake)~~

- ~~Catch and release for bass~~
- ~~Northern pike: no limit~~
- ~~Spearing: open for northern pike~~
- ~~Salmon: see individual waters for special regulations~~

Rationale: Due to the presence of the Lake Inez Fish Barrier, there were separate regulations for the sections of river above and below the barrier. Now that the barrier has

been removed, these changes will establish one set of regulations that will apply to the entire section upstream from the Salmon Lake inlet, including all tributaries to the Clearwater except the West Fork and Marshall Creek. The regulations for the sections above and below the Lake Inez barrier had some differences, so by combining them into one section, some standardization was necessary. The extension of the catch and release section for cutthroat up above the barrier was done as a conservation measure for this species. The removal of the Combined Trout exception above the barrier was done to allow more harvest of introduced trout and favor the cutthroat. The catch-and-release regulation for bass was dropped entirely because there is limited opportunity for bass to develop and the regulation is therefore deemed unnecessary. The title of this exception is also being changed, from *Clearwater River Drainage* to *Clearwater River and Tributaries*. By doing so, it is no longer appropriate to include the *Lakes* section here, and this is why the regulations for Lake Alva, Placid Lake, Salmon Lake, and Seeley Lake have been stricken. These lake regulations are included elsewhere in the regulations under the respective lake names.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

CHANGE (page 59):

ELK LAKE

- Catch-and-release for lake trout *and* grayling
- *The Narrows Creek spawning channel is closed to angling*

Rationale: Centennial Valley Arctic grayling were recently reintroduced into Elk Lake to provide a genetic reserve and conservation brood for Centennial Valley Arctic grayling. Until the population becomes established to the point that it is abundant and genetically diverse enough to sustain harvest, catch and release only angling is appropriate. The population will eventually be maintained by natural reproduction in a single constructed spawning channel (Narrows Creek spawning channel) but at this time it is not self-sustaining. Because of the small size and importance of the spawning habitat provided by this channel and vulnerability of the spawning fish, no angling can be supported there.

CHANGE (page 67):

RED ROCK CREEK (Beaverhead River drainage)

- *Open entire year except May 15 through June 14*
- ~~Combined trout: Includes cutthroat trout~~
- *Cutthroat trout: 20 daily and in possession*

Rationale: Preliminary data collected by the USFWS suggests there is a potential for predation and/or competition by non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout on Arctic grayling. The closure from May 15 to June 15 will protect Arctic grayling during the majority of the period that spawning and egg incubation occur. Opening the season to angling the remainder of the year allows increased opportunity for seasonally present

Yellowstone cutthroat and brook trout. The increased bag limit for the cutthroat trout is intended to facilitate a cooperative FWP and USFWS study to assess the effects of non-native salmonid suppression on Arctic grayling abundance and survival in the Red Rock Creek system and on the Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge. This regulation change would be in place for a five year period during which Arctic grayling survival and abundance will be monitored.

NEW (page 70):

UPPER RED ROCK LAKE*

- *Cutthroat trout: 20 daily and in possession*
- *Catch and release for grayling*
- * Dates to be determined and included in final regulations.

Rationale: Preliminary data collected by the USFWS suggests there is a potential for predation and/or competition by non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout on Arctic grayling. Upper Red Rock Lake is presently closed to angling. However, the USFWS is willing to allow access by anglers for a relatively short period following fledging by trumpeter swans (August). The increased bag limit for the cutthroat trout is intended to facilitate a cooperative FWP and USFWS study to assess the effects of non-native salmonid suppression on Arctic grayling abundance and survival in the Red Rock Creek system and on the Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge. Because the grayling population is of considerable conservation value, catch and release only angling for this species is appropriate at this time. This regulation change would be in place for a five year period during which Arctic grayling survival and abundance will be monitored.

NEW (page 71):

WIDGEON POND

- *Cutthroat trout: 20 daily and in possession*

Rationale: Preliminary data collected by the USFWS suggests there is a potential for predation and/or competition by non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout on Arctic grayling. The increased bag limit for the cutthroat trout is intended to facilitate a cooperative FWP and USFWS study to assess the effects of non-native salmonid suppression on Arctic grayling abundance and survival in the Red Rock Creek system and on the Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge. The USFWS will transfer non-native cutthroat trout from Red Rock Creek into Widgeon Pond. This suppression approach is occurring specifically to maximize their availability to anglers; these fish are presently available to anglers for a relatively short period of time in Red Rock Creek and Upper Red Rock Lake. This regulation change would be in place for a five year period during which Arctic grayling survival and abundance will be monitored.

CHANGE (page 72):

YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Yellowstone National Park Boundary to I-90 Bridge at Billings

- Open entire year

- Combined Trout: 4 brown trout and/or rainbow trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout.
- ~~Hook and Line: 2 lines with 2 hooks per line all year from the mouth of the Clarks Fork River to the I-90 Bridge at Billings~~

Rationale: This proposed regulation would drop this hook and line exception for the Yellowstone River so that the Central District Hook and Lines limit for rivers and streams of 1 line with 2 hooks per line would apply to the entire Yellowstone River in the Central District. The current exception was originally put in place to accommodate burbot anglers who wanted the opportunity to harvest more fish. This exception is no longer relevant or necessary as very few anglers have been found in recent years to be using 2 lines on this section of river. The effect of this will be to standardize and simplify regulations on the Yellowstone River.

EASTERN DISTRICT

CHANGE (page 75):

Fort Peck Reservation – Tribal Boundary Water Regulations

Non-tribal members licensed through the State of Montana and/or Fort Peck Tribes that are fishing in waters that form the exterior boundaries of the Reservation – Big Muddy Creek, Missouri River and/or Milk River – are permitted to harvest the following limits:

Burbot (Ling)	5 daily and in possession
Channel catfish	20 10 daily and 20 in possession
Northern Pike	10 daily and in possession
Paddlefish	1 daily and in possession
Sauger/Walleye	5 daily and 10 in possession
Pallid sturgeon	0 (all waters are closed to fishing for pallid sturgeon)
Shovelnose Sturgeon	5 daily and in possession

Rationale: Fort Peck tribal staff has stated that they want consistency with tribal fishing regulations and State of Montana regulations. This change incorporates the catfish regulation changes that were approved by the FWP Commission in 2012 into this section of the regulations booklet.